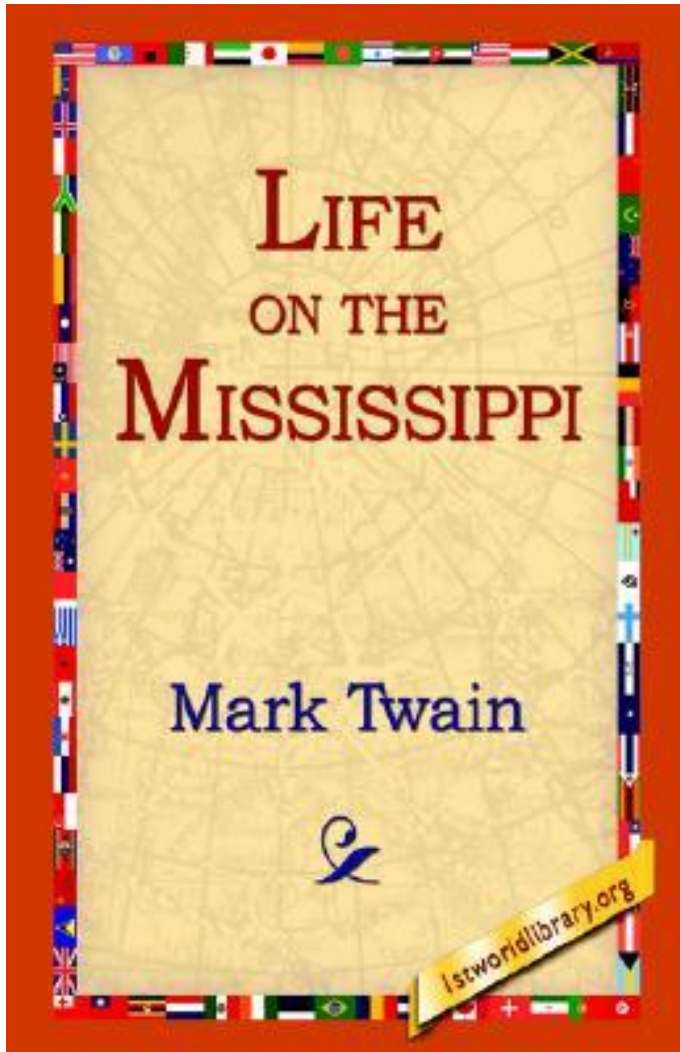

Mark Twain

Life on the Mississippi



Title: Life on the Mississippi

Author: Mark Twain

Format: Hardcover

Language: English

Pages: 552

Publisher: , 0

ISBN: 1421807645

Format: PDF / Kindle / ePub

Size: 6 MB

Download: allowed

Description

BUT the basin of the Mississippi is the BODY OF THE NATION. All the other parts are but members, important in themselves, yet more important in their relations to this. Exclusive of the Lake basin and of 300,000 square miles in Texas and New Mexico, which in many aspects form a part of it, this basin contains about 1,250,000 square miles. In extent it is the second great valley of the world, being exceeded only by that of the Amazon. The valley of the frozen Obi approaches it in extent; that of La Plata comes next in space, and probably in habitable capacity, having about eight-ninths of its area; then comes that of the Yenisei, with about seven-ninths; the Lena, Amoor, Hoang-ho, Yang-tse-kiang, and Nile, five-ninths; the Ganges, less than one-half; the Indus, less than one-third; the Euphrates, one-fifth; the Rhine, one-fifteenth. It exceeds in extent the whole of Europe, exclusive of Russia, Norway, and Sweden. IT WOULD CONTAIN AUSTRIA FOUR TIMES, GERMANY OR SPAIN FIVE TIMES, FRANCE SIX TIMES, THE BRITISH ISLANDS OR ITALY TEN TIMES. Conceptions formed from the river-basins of Western Europe are rudely shocked when we consider the extent of the valley of the Mississippi; nor are those formed from the sterile basins of the great rivers of Siberia, the lofty plateaus of Central Asia, or the mighty sweep of the swampy Amazon more adequate. Latitude, elevation, and rainfall all combine to render every part of the Mississippi Valley capable of supporting a dense population. AS A DWELLING-PLACE FOR CIVILIZED MAN IT IS BY FAR THE FIRST UPON OUR GLOBE.

Insightful reviews

Jean Poulos: Of the first fifteen chapters of the book, twelve are reprinted from "The Atlantic." In the three introductory ones which precede these, the physical character of the river is sketched. The book was published in 1883. The book begins with a brief history of the river beginning with the Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto then on the French Marquette and La Salle.

The most engrossing section describes the author's education as a steamboat pilot. Vivid details and anecdotes link the story of life on the River. He tells of the odd habits of the steamboat pilots. There is a section on how to read the river including the conformation of the banks, sandbanks, islands and inlets as well as sudden cut outs of the river after storms.

The rest of the book is an account of Twain's trip down the Mississippi decades later as an old man. He describes the changes in the river and of American during his lifetime. The book is hilarious, fascinating, meandering tour of the Mississippi River most of all the book is entertaining. I read this as an audio book downloaded from Audible. Grover Gardner does an excellent job narrating the book.

Daniel Silveyra: I didn't finish this book - I stopped around page 220 in my edition.

As much as I love Mark Twain, and as much as he can write...the book is about a river. The first few chapters are about Twain's days as an apprentice steamboat pilot, and they are interesting

and fun to to read.

After them, however, begin a series of chapters regarding how the towns on the Mississippi have changed, what European travelers of old said of them, what the different prices of shipping through rail or train were, and in general a lot of researched facts about an area in the US from the late 19th century.

If this is your cup of tea, then have at it. I was looking for entertainment.

What is painful about setting this book aside is that, interspersed with the minutiae about the river itself are great "yarns" that Twain picked up from fellow travelers. Those are riveting and well written, but too few and far in between to really endure.

Mike: The semester finally ended and I'm free to read what I want. So what do I do? Start reading books in anticipation of the studio project for next semester: planning and designing for a river town. Ruth and I got this book at the Becky Thatcher House in Hannibal, MO a few years ago when we went for a visit and even got it inscribed with a seal indicating so. Being from Missouri, I'm required to be both skeptical (it is the "Show-Me" state after all) and proud of Mark Twain. With this book, it's easy and enjoyable to be both. Written at approximately the same time as he wrote *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, one can see many crossovers between the two books: a rich survey of the Mississippi River system and an evocation of life in the heyday of steamboats before the advent/supremacy of the railroad. But what is most intriguing about this book is Twain's description of his education as a cub pilot and the overwhelming learning curve of such a process, which amounts to learning how to read the river as one reads a book: always aware of the subtle day to day changes and transformations resulting from the the flow of water. Twain also throws in a few "tough yarns" for good measure and to keep us honest: stories rich in detail (Twain describes one steamboat as being so caked in soil that it could pass for real estate) and abundant in humor (I can't count the number of times that I laughed and giggled while reading this book.) Twain's description of his wide-eyed first encounter with a steamboat pilot is hilarious (the best line being, "in the matter of profanity, [the pilot:] was sublime"), but outdone by Twain's quotation of a passenger's description of Lake Providence mosquitoes:

"[the passenger:] told many remarkable things about those lawless insects. Among others, said he had seen them try to *vote*. Noticing that this statement seemed to be a good deal of a strain on us, he modified it a little: said he might have been mistaken, as to that particular, but knew he had seen them around the polls 'canvassing.'"

Finally, Twain's chapter on his return to his boyhood home of Hannibal is both touching and humorous, as Twain purposely misidentifies himself to a townsman and sets about inquiring of old schoolmates to learn of their fates: some stayed in Hannibal, some left, some died in the War [Civil!:], some married, some married and divorced, some became successful, others failed, one was locked away in an insane asylum, etc. After asking about a specific unnamed boy, Twain is told: "Well, now his case *is* curious! There wasn't a human being in this town but knew that that boy was a chucklehead; perfect dummy; just a stupid ass, as you may say. Everybody knew it and everybody said it. Well, if that boy isn't the first lawyer in the State of Missouri today,

I'm a Democrat." When Twain asks of the fate of Samuel Clemens, the townsman replies, "Oh he succeeded well enough – another case of damned fool. If they had sent him to St. Louis, he would have succeeded sooner." It's one of many ingenious chapters in a great book.

Karen Chung: this can be my favourite Twain paintings so far. i locate with Twain that the extra he's telling the truth, the extra i love a work. i am simply no longer as loopy approximately his outlandish fictional concoctions. This booklet has helped me make greater feel of Twain's widespread unflinching therapy of death. This was once definitely the results of years of brooding over definite stories of his early life, as published in lots of passages during this book. the ultimate chapters be certain that Tom Sawyer is certainly to an outstanding quantity autobiographical. listening to a piece approximately what St. Paul - my place of origin - and Minneapolis, Minnesota have been like within the overdue nineteenth century used to be an unforeseen deal with on the end. In a few ways, it sounded as if St. Paul, in this heyday of the railways, was once a comparatively livelier middle of task then than it's now. The 4 appendices are all worth studying or hearing conscientiously - do not bypass over them! I listened to this as an audio publication - John Greenman has recorded a lot of Twain's works for Librivox, and has performed a wonderful task on all of them.

Jessica: Mark Twain in truth must have caught with novels. This was once truly very interesting...for concerning the first third of the book. After that, it obtained very tedious. It used to be just a little over-detailed and skim extra like a diary intended for his reminiscent entertainment only, rather than truly attempting to write in a manner that his readers might enjoy. I loved the fast tales he carried out and the outline of the river, though.

wally: i have learn a couple of Twain's stories...thought I observed anything approximately "non-fiction" for this one, yet this can be Twain...so....Starts out with this sub-title:Life at the Mississippi via MARK TWAIN THE 'BODY OF THE NATION' Begins; But the basin of the Mississippi is the physique OF THE NATION. the entire different components are yet members, very important in themselves, but extra vital of their kinfolk to this. specific of the Lake basin and of 300,000 sq. miles in Texas and New Mexico, which in lots of facets shape part of it, this basin includes approximately 1,250,000 sq. miles. In volume it's the moment nice valley of the world, being surpassed merely by means of that of the Amazon. And all that w/o good thing about the Internet...onward and upward. Update Finished, Friday, 24 FEB 12, four P.M. e.s.t. Great read! There's a lot to get pleasure from during this telling from Twain. The Mississippi River comes alive as an lively force, ever-changing and unmoved through those that movement on it or nearby. The telling covers a number time. incorporated within the telling are smaller tales unfold all through from Indian legend to different stories all with Twain's indelible mark. there is one part that echoes Huck Finn's marveling approximately every little thing in the home he visits, all of the doodads of the day, from books to objects the folk grasp at the wall, although in contrast to Huck's itemized list, this one is going on for pages. Twain discovered river piloting aboard a variety of steamboats, starting as a "cub" and apprenticing for 2 and part years or so, finally acquiring his riverboat pilot's license. That used to be enlightening, being a "licensed contractor" who has skilled the scrutiny of the country bureaucrats, all unelected, unaccountable, a regulatory troika that we the folk have enabled with all 3 powers of government--AND THERE ARE those that GLEEFULLY call for extra OF SAME!!!!--though in Twain's telling of the Riverboat Pilot's Benevolent Society, or howsomever he labelled the

device, it's a curious part of the nations' history...licensing, and how and demeanour within which these in a exchange search to "protect" their trade. In this telling, too, Twain explains how he got here to take advantage of that identify MARK TWAIN...the identify initially positioned to exploit by means of a Captain Isaiah Sellers...or whatever just about that...I'm not likely to hassle taking a look it as much as verify...anyway, this captain used to put in writing details concerning the river (the riverboat pilots' bread and butter used to be information, memory, wisdom of the river) and this used to be published in a Louisiana paper below the identify MARK TWAIN. one of many brief 'stories inside this telling' pointed out above is that this time Twain (and cannot you think the ho-polois rupturing a disc like they did w/that Fry-guy? if Twain embellished?---be nonetheless my middle and do not permit Oprah know.)....anyway, there is this time he swam out to a raft of whatever....before the steam boats, there have been keel boats that plied the river...so...he swims out to affix a ride. the men did such things as that. He lies there in the back of a few barrels or in a different way out of sight...eventually the boys there seize on....seems like he explains that it both one positioned him in brain to put in writing what we all know as Huck Finn, anything alongside these lines....read the book...find out. Covers a interval of time...Twain visits the river back after 20 years or so...heads downriver back as he had earlier, this time as incognito as he can get....not too profitable that...and he witnesses a few of the many changes. Already the steam boats have been going the way in which of the dinosaur yet he famous a number of the changes, a number of he wondered why they hadn't been instituted earlier. Then...once down river, he turns and heads the entire long ago up, finally arriving in St. Paul and the opposite city...forget the name....go gophers...or vikings....or whatever...the tale complete, travels via Chicago again to New York. There's 10% worthy of appendix stories, one concerning flooding and the like, one other an Indian legend. reliable read.

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